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Underwater Explosion Tests Planned

WASHINGTON (AP) — Officials indicated yesterday that the United States will go ahead with plans for 24 non-nuclear underwater test explosions off the Russian-held Kurile Islands, despite a Soviet protest.

Authorities described the program as a major seismological field experiment to determine how fast sound waves travel through the earth in a vast earthquake-prone area of the north Pacific Ocean 500 miles long and 90 miles wide.

This information is essential to the accurate locating of earthquakes and other phenomenon, it was explained.

Sources said the series of one-to-five-ton TNT blasts will begin in October under the direction of the Defense Department's Advance Research Projects Agency.

The program is designed to study the feasibility of distinguishing between underground nuclear explosions and earthquakes through the detecting, locating and identifying of seismic disturbances.